

**Investiture Speech – 9/3/09**  
**Dr. G. P. “Bud” Peterson**  
**President, Georgia Institute of Technology**

Thank you Chancellor Davis. On behalf of the more than 5,600 faculty and staff and 20,000 students here at the Georgia Institute of Technology, I want to extend a hearty welcome to you, Governor Perdue, Congressman Gingrey, Board of Regents Chair Hatcher, and all of our other special guests. We are honored to have you here with us today.

I want to express my thanks to you and the entire Georgia Tech community for the warm welcome Val and I have received since our arrival five months ago.

I also want to extend a special welcome to long-time Tech student and alumnus George P. Burdell. Although I have yet to meet him, I was told he would be here with us today.

Before I begin, I want to add my thanks to Provost Gary Schuster for his leadership during his time as Interim President. His steady hand guided Georgia Tech through some of the most challenging financial times the Institute has faced and for that we are all enormously grateful.

Today is a special day for the Georgia Institute of Technology and we are here to celebrate our proud history and our promising future.

Before I came to Tech, I was well aware of its reputation for excellence, but I did not realize what a truly incredible place it really was. I quickly learned of the tremendous impact it has had, and continues to have, on the lives of our students, the state's economy and on the larger global community. In just five short months, I have come to share the tremendous pride we all have in this fine institution.

We can all be proud of Tech's reputation, as one of the nation's top ten public universities, with outstanding programs in engineering, architecture, computing, liberal arts, management and the sciences.

We can be proud that in addition to our Atlanta campus, we are offering learning and research across the state and around the world—including Europe, Asia and Latin America.

We can be proud that Georgia Tech was named to the honor roll of the Chronicle of Higher Education's annual "Great Colleges to Work For."

We can be proud of our students. Last week we welcomed one of the largest, most diverse and best qualified freshman classes in Tech's history, or RATS—Recently Acquired Tech Students. We must never forget that the success Georgia Tech has enjoyed and the acclaim it has received are a direct result of our spirited, hard-working student body.

We can be proud of our faculty and staff, the men and women who shape the keen minds of our students. They have won hundreds of prestigious awards, many of which extend well beyond just the sciences and engineering, into disciplines such as public policy, business and the liberal arts.

We can be proud of Tech's \$525 million in annual research expenditures, which help the Institute consistently rank among the top 10 nationally among research programs without a medical school. It also contributes to Tech's annual impact on the economy, which was more than \$2 BILLION last year.

We can be proud of Georgia Tech's tradition in athletics. Our NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletic program is one of the oldest and most storied in the country and sponsors varsity intercollegiate competition in 17 programs. These programs represent the best in intercollegiate athletics and our student athletes perform at a remarkably high level, both on and off the field.

And finally, we can be proud of our 121,000 alumni working around the world. In addition to being leaders in business, industry, government, and in their communities, Tech alumni are known for their loyalty, their enthusiasm, and their commitment to the Institute. Today, Georgia Tech ranks first in the country among public institutions in the percentage of alumni who give back to their alma mater.

In this challenging economic environment, we are extremely fortunate to have the support of our alumni, the Georgia Tech Foundation, and other generous organizations and individuals, all of whom partner with us on critical programs, projects and facilities.

Since assuming my position as President of Georgia Tech on the first of April, I have participated in

- the formal opening of the Marcus Nanotechnology Building, which will allow us to expand important leading edge research in this field;
- the groundbreaking for the Zelnak Basketball Practice Facility, which will provide much needed practice space for both our men's and women's teams;
- and the beginning of the construction of the G. Wayne Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, which will be one of the finest undergraduate laboratory and student service facilities in the country.

All of these are visible reminders of the wonderful resources that lie ahead for Tech students, faculty, and staff, all of which have been made possible by the generosity and vision of thousands of people who believe in Georgia Tech, and who believe in higher education.

Higher education is an investment in the future. Today, our society is facing many challenges: the global economic recession, energy, health care, water resources and climate change. If these problems are to be solved, they will be solved at our universities, at places like Georgia Tech.

In addition to preparing graduates, our institutions of higher learning contribute to society in dozens of other ways, helping with needed research, assisting in commerce, and strengthening our communities through outreach. With the many challenges we are facing, there is always a temptation to pull back on the support for higher education. Clearly, this would be a mistake, for it is our universities, and in particular, our research universities that are preparing the next generation of people who will identify and resolve the problems of the future.

We are grateful to the University System of Georgia, our Regents, the legislature and the state for recognizing this. While we are all participating in cutbacks to help with tighter budgets, the vision and commitment that have made Georgia Tech great in the past, will continue well into the future.

It is not an accident that Georgia is one of only a handful of states with two or more public universities ranked in the top 25 by *US News & World Report* - it's because the people of Georgia, the Regents, and the Legislature all understand the importance of higher education and what it means to the economy, what it means to the development of human capital, and what it means to the overall welfare of the state of Georgia and our country.

The HOPE Scholarship is a prime example of the state's commitment to education. It helps make a college degree a reality for thousands of Georgia residents.

At Tech we take it a step further with the G. Wayne Clough Tech Promise program. Alumni and our many other friends are continuing to give generously to the Tech Promise program, which provides a debt-free education to academically qualified Georgia residents who cannot afford to attend without financial assistance. Through a combination of scholarships, grants and job opportunities, the dream of a Georgia Tech degree is becoming a reality for students whose family income is less than \$33,000.

At its best, higher education connects what is going on in academia with the rest of the world. And while here at Georgia Tech, we have a Tech Tower that serves as a symbol of our proud past, we have never been restricted to existence in an ivory tower.

Since its founding, Georgia Tech has been a leader in teaching, research and economic development, partnering with business, industry and the government to develop real-life solutions to real-world problems, now and in the future. Many of the solutions to tomorrow's problems will come from collaboration and interdisciplinary research.

An example of this collaboration is the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering, a joint effort between Tech and Emory University. Eleven years ago neither institution had a biomedical engineering program; yet today, our joint program is ranked among the very best in the country.

Today, researchers in our joint laboratories are developing gene prediction protocols, cancer detection and prevention methodologies, and cardiac regeneration and biomedical imaging systems that will transform the way we think about treatment and health care.

Another example is our ongoing work in the field of nanotechnology - the result of collaboration between physicists and engineers. Researchers at Tech have developed a new treatment that attaches magnetic nanoparticles to cancer cells, allowing them to be destroyed, or captured and carried out of the body.

Imagine what a difference a treatment of this type could make in people's lives?

The idea came from the work of Ken Scarberry, a PhD student in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry. He originally conceived the idea as a means of extracting viruses and virally infected cells when his advisor, Professor John Zhang, asked "What if --- this technology could be applied to cancer."

These types of collaborations and the vision of those that developed them are just two examples of the types of interdisciplinary activities and broad vision that we must continue to develop in order to solve the most challenging problems that lie before us.

Much of what we have been able to accomplish here at Georgia Tech is due to the vision of people from our past: people who like Professor Zhang, asked “What if?” People like, Jim Dull, who as associate dean of students in 1961 conceived and implemented a plan for the peaceful integration of Georgia Tech. And, more recently, people who asked “What if Georgia Tech were to jump the connector, build a bridge that is actually more like a park, and create Technology Square?”

Every day, Georgia Tech faculty, students and staff are asking “What if” and creating things like tornado warning technologies, advancing the science of sustainability, protecting computer network operations, developing medical treatments, addressing key technology policy issues and strengthening global trade.

But here at Georgia Tech, we’re not only solving problems for today, we’re also designing the future. That’s why we initiated a strategic planning process to develop a 25-year strategic vision - a plan that will envision what Georgia Tech should be like on its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, when the children who are being born today will be graduating as proud Tech alums.

Just the thought of predicting the world in 25 years is daunting, especially when you look at how much we’ve changed. As we look back 25 years, IBM’s first personal computers were just hitting the marketplace – remember the AT, the XT? The first cell phone entered the market in 1984 and it was a brick, weighing two pounds, holding a charge for only 30 minutes and selling for nearly \$4,000. Today, they are ubiquitous and instead of just talking, people are texting and tweeting. The number of text messages sent and received every day exceeds the population of the planet.

Nineteen years ago the protocol was developed for the World Wide Web. Google.com was formed just over 10 years ago.

Fast forward to today, to the Google library project, with the goal of digitizing every book in the English language in a searchable database. By the time the freshmen of today graduate, they will have at their fingertips, access to more than 32 million books in a searchable database.

It is our role in higher education to not only keep up with these technological advances, but to develop them, and to prepare our students to know how to best use it – how to convert all that information into knowledge, because there is a difference.

We have before us today an opportunity to shape the future of not only this great institution, but also the many students who will pass through its doors in the coming years. The students we are educating today will develop cures for diseases, resolve the issues around climate change and water resources, and witness interplanetary space travel. We must make sure that we have prepared them well for that environment.

During the past 25 years, Georgia Tech has continued to improve - a steady pursuit of excellence in all areas. Now we find ourselves in the enviable position of being one of the best public universities in the country. Just this past year the College of Management jumped from 29th to 22nd in the US News rankings. And every one of our engineering specialties is now ranked in the top 10 in the country. Today we must both respect our past, but we must also design the future.

Our place among the best universities is continually being challenged and we will be judged not by how well we have done in the past, but rather by how well we can meet the evolving needs of the world around us. We cannot be a fast-follower -- we must lead, defining the rules and planning for the long-term. We must ask hard questions – questions like:

- *What will the student experience be like in 25 years?*
- *How can Georgia Tech strengthen the state, the nation and the world through our leadership?*
- *What will, or should be, our “international footprint” and how can we prepare our graduates for a “Global Future?”*
- *What has and will continue to differentiate our graduates from those at other top institutions around the world?*

Over the course of the next several months we will be working to answer these and other questions as part of the Strategic Planning process.

We've designed the process to be both comprehensive and inclusive - reaching out to the entire Georgia Tech community and combining our best thinking to design action plans around key issues.

You - the faculty, staff, students, alumni and other friends of Georgia Tech - know the Institute best, and are uniquely qualified to help shape her future.

This afternoon our Strategic Planning Subcommittees will host nine open sessions at the Georgia Tech Hotel and the Global Learning Center, where the entire Tech community is invited to provide feedback on a number of key themes.

I encourage you to attend and to participate in these discussions, today and over the course of the next several months. Your participation in this process is critical to our success.

These individual themes will together, become part of an overall strategic vision that we will launch next fall, one that will take us to 2035.

As we design our future, we will embrace the values that have made Georgia Tech what it is today. While our influence and reputation will increase, the culture upon which our reputation has been built -- hard work, curiosity combined with intellectual rigor, collegiality, inclusiveness, and an intense passion for problem solving -- will remain steadfast and will serve as our foundation, as we strive to not only define, but to be, *the technological research university of the 21st century AND to educate the leaders of a technologically driven world.*

We will continue to lead, to seek, to learn, to analyze and to solve, for this is the very essence of Georgia Tech, and as we begin the strategic planning process, it is important that we look at all the possibilities.

We must envision a future for Georgia Tech grounded in our cultural legacy and centered on far reaching strategic themes that span our education, research, and economic development missions.

Students, as well as faculty and staff, can and will benefit from a legacy culture that thrives on creative and analytical thinking, and that will be further enhanced as we continue to stress the importance of interdisciplinarity, innovation and leadership. -- In the past 25 years, Georgia Tech has transformed itself from a regional institution into a national research university.

In the next 25 years Georgia Tech must firmly establish itself as an international leader in resolving the most pressing issues of our time, issues in areas of global health, water, and energy, and the linking of technology with economics, policy, and management, while remaining true to its original purpose.

Georgia Tech is a product of the people who have worked together for the past nearly 125 years to make her what she is today. We are poised for preeminence, and it is through people working together, all the people of Georgia Tech, that we can identify and achieve our goals.

It is a privilege and honor to serve as your president in such an exciting and pivotal time in the history of the Institute and of our society. I am absolutely convinced that together, we can accomplish anything. - Thank you.